Chopin's Wormhole

BY JOE GORE

THIS ASTONISHING CHORD SEQUENCE comes from composer Frédéric Chopin, who wrote almost exclusively for the piano. As is often the case with piano music, this passage is fairly easy to play on the keyboard but is absolute *murder* on the guitar. It's worth soldiering through because: (1) it's a superb finger-stretching exercise, (2) it's beautiful, and (3) the lurching yet logical harmonic leaps are likely to inspire new composition and arranging ideas.

This progression is easier to hear and play if you eyeball its patterns first. Check it out: There's an unbroken chain of four-note chords. The lowest voice—the one with the stems pointing down—simply descends chromatically. Through the first four chords, the highest voice rises chromatically in mirror reflection of the low voice, while the middle two voices don't move at all. But, starting at the beginning of bar 2, the *second* voice from the top starts to ascend, while the ones above and below it stay put. In bar 3, the *third* voice from the top gets going, while the two above it hold steady. The motion returns to the top voice in bar 4, and so on.

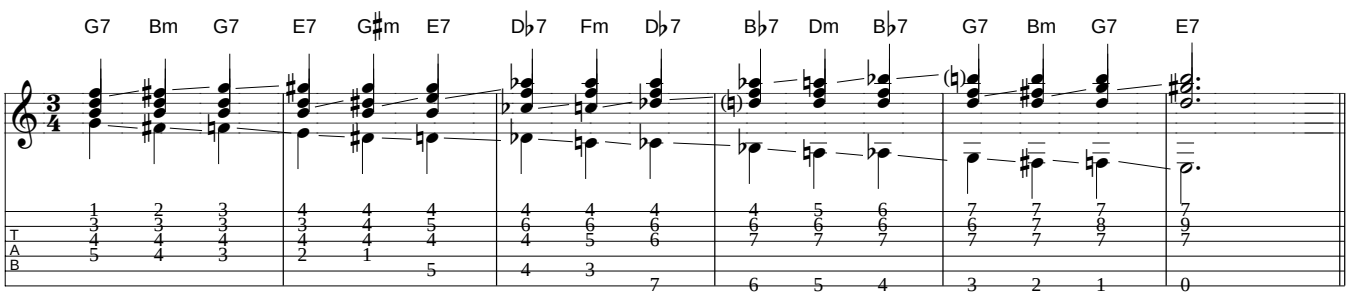
Next, inspect the chord symbols. Each measure is based around a single dominant 7th chord. Beats one and three always host different inversions of the same harmony, while the minor chord in between is a fleeting by-product of the chromatic motion. The main roots of each measure—*G*, *E*, *D♭*, *B♭*, and then *G* again—spell out a diminished 7th chord. In true diminished-chord fashion, progressions derived from this sequence are great for sneaky key changes. Like augmented or whole-tone passages, they are eager to help you pull off reckless modulation stunts.

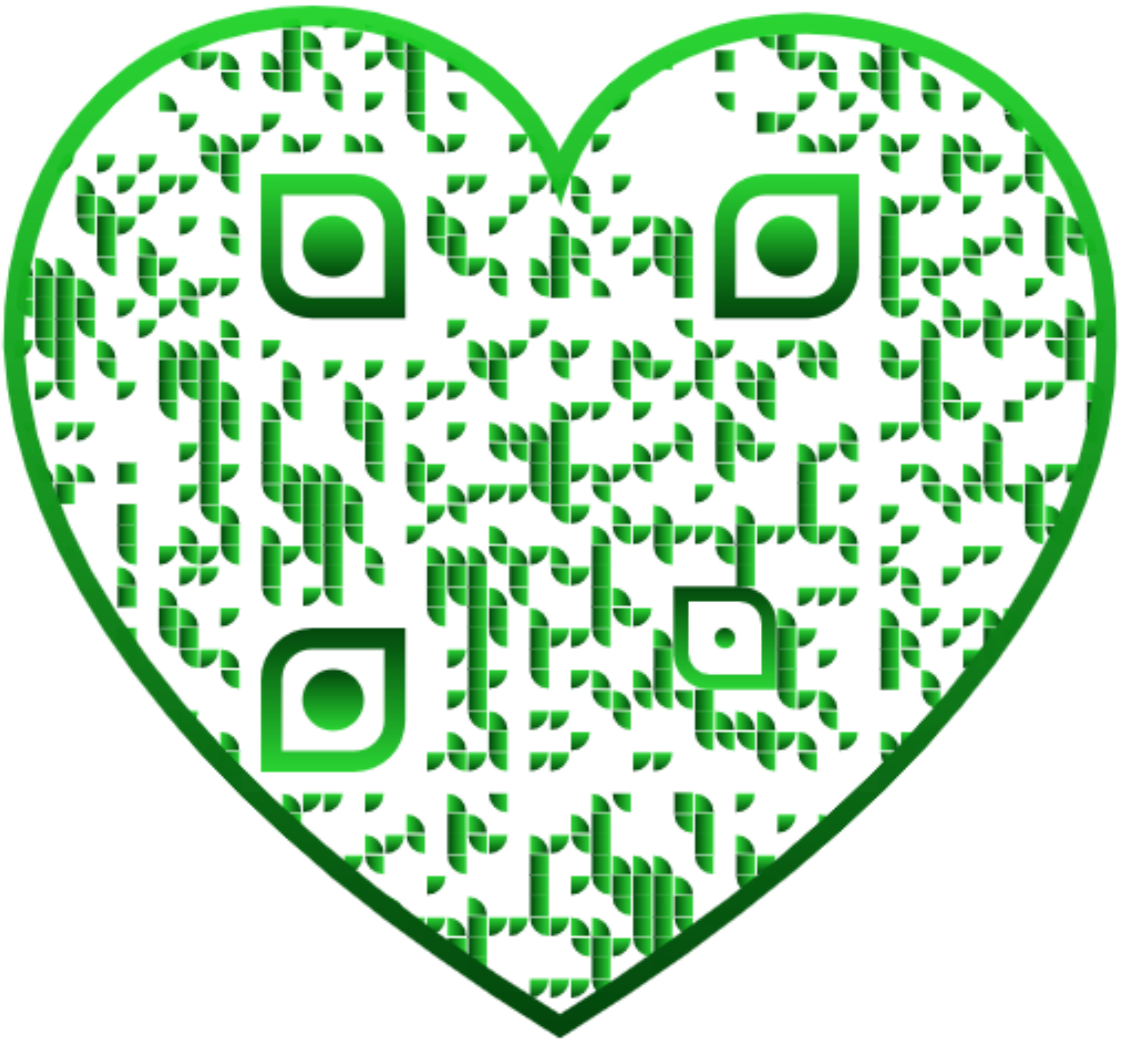
Now, play the sequence and try to make the voices sound as connected as possible, despite the fact that some of the fingerings are rather sadistic. In fact, bar 5 may be impossible unless you tap some of the bass notes with the tip of a picking-hand finger. But it doesn't really matter whether you make it that far, since this progression has no real beginning or end. I've only stopped at bar 6 because we've hit the guitar's lowest note.

You can jump off the merry-go-round anywhere—just think of a measure's principal chord as V7 of a new key. Try slipping into *A* minor after the end of bar 2, *G♭* minor after bar 3, *E♭* minor after bar 4, or *C* minor after bar 5. It's the harmonic equivalent of a wormhole in the space/time continuum (if I have my sci-fi jargon straight).

Chopin died almost 150 years ago, but his harmonies still dazzle. Want more? Start with his nocturnes, preludes, and mazurkas. Even though these are his shortest and easiest works, they contain some of his most breathtaking leaps of imagination. Seekers will be rewarded.

Consulting editor Joe Gore performs on recent and upcoming releases by PJ Harvey, Tom Waits, Oranj Symphonette, Action Plus+, Bomb the Bass, and Meat Beat Manifesto.





Sus4 & More

BY GARRISON FEWELL

IN THE '60S, THE DOMI-nant-7 sus4 chord played a prominent role in the pioneering modal jazz of McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter, and Herbie Hancock. Today, its sound is integral to modern jazz guitar. But to groove with the dom7sus4 you need to be familiar with its voicings and related single-note lines. We'll cover both in this lesson.

Here's a simple approach to improvising on a dom7sus4: Play a minor-7th arpeggio starting a fifth above the chord root. For example, *Em7* (*E, G, B, D*) sounds like an upper structure of *A7sus4* (*A, D, E, G*) with an added 9 (*B*).

Let's try it. In **Ex. 1**, first calibrate your ears with the *A7sus4* voicing (which you can also think of as *Em7/A*), then play the three-bar line. The line ascends as an *Em7* arpeggio and descends as an *E* minor-pentatonic scale.

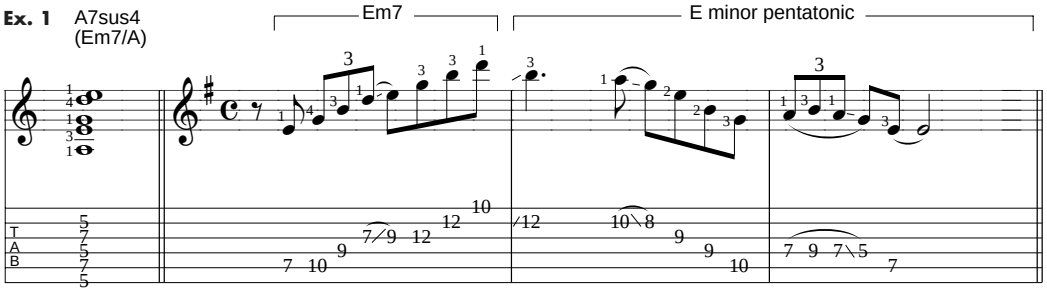
Built in fourths, **Ex. 2**'s *A7sus4* evokes a modal sound reminiscent of Tyner. Use this voicing to record a vamp, then work out the *E* minor-pentatonic line above, which also features fourths. Such pentatonic lines are especially useful for modal tunes in minor keys. Check out George Benson on "So What" from *Beyond the Blue Horizon*. You'll hear exactly what I mean.

Now try your own melodic variations over Ex. 2's *A7sus4*.

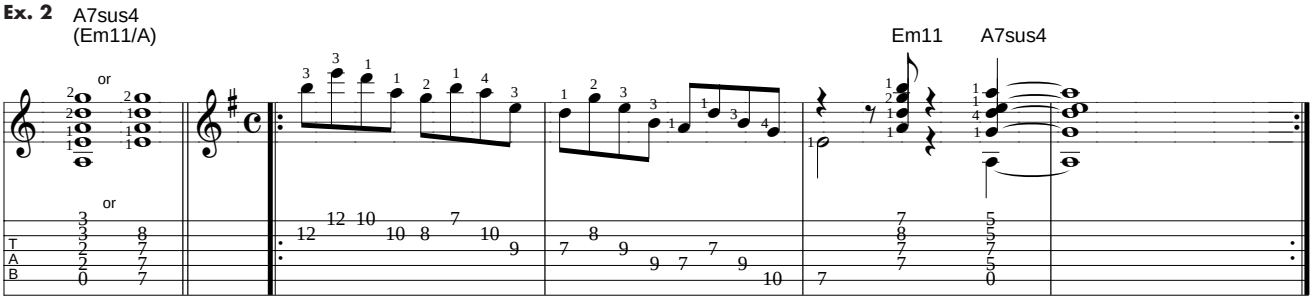
Shifting to a *Bm7* arpeggio (*B, D, F♯, A*) adds color to your lines by accenting *A7*'s 13—*F♯*. Also featuring *F♯*, *Gmaj7* (*G, B, D, F♯*) has a similar effect. Using **Ex. 3**'s extended voicing, record a repeating two-bar vamp, and then play the jazzy line. Notice how it links both *Bm7* and *Gmaj7* arpeggios.

Preceded by yet another cool, extended *A7sus4* voicing, the next two examples feature lines forged from a *B* minor-pentatonic scale. **Ex. 4** is a fourths-based pattern,

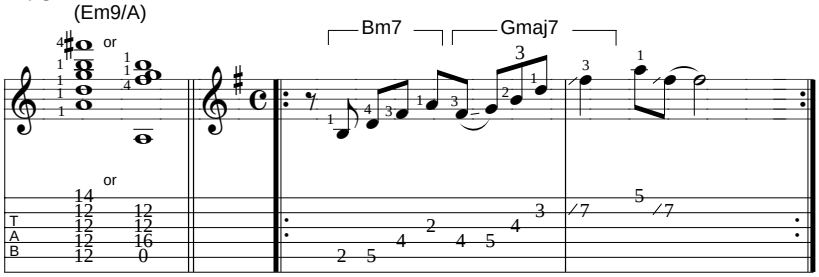
Ex. 1 A7sus4 (Em7/A)



Ex. 2 A7sus4 (Em11/A)



Ex. 3 A7sus4 (Em9/A)



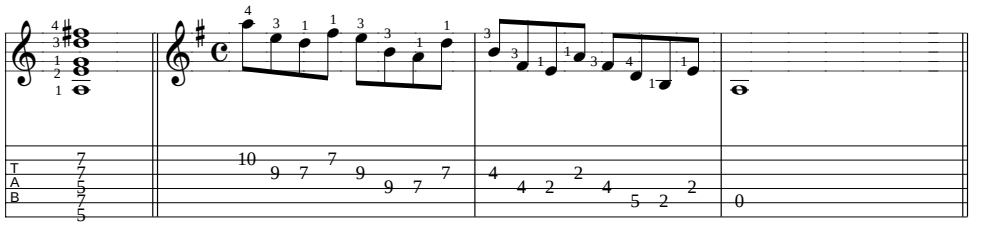
while **Ex. 5** is a string-skipping line based on larger intervals of sevenths and sixths. To hear these phrases in context, play them over rhythm tracks featuring the companion *A7sus4*.

The voicing in **Ex. 6** is a *G* triad sandwiched between a pair of *A*s. Based on a *Gmaj7* arpeggio, the winding line spans 15 frets and throws in a couple of string-skipping seventh intervals as it descends. You know the drill: Track a rhythm, then jam on it.

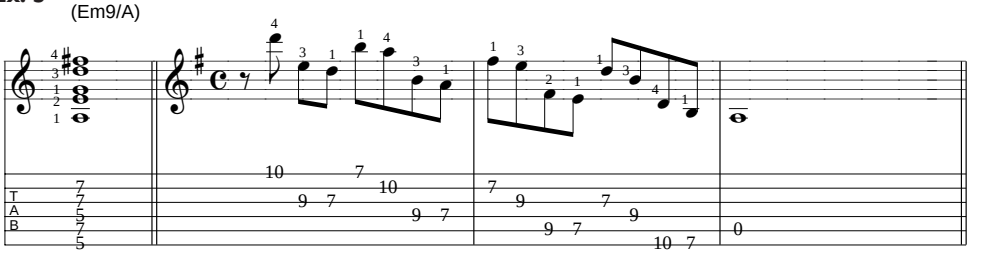
Now develop your own ideas, using your backup tracks to keep things musical. But first, let's recap our dom7sus4 soloing formulas:

- From the chord's 5, work around a minor-7th arpeggio or minor-pentatonic scale.
- From the chord's 2, play off a minor-7th arpeggio or minor-pentatonic scale.
- From the chord's ♭7, play off a major-7th arpeggio.
- Here's a final tip: From the chord's 5, try playing blues licks, for example, *E* blues against *A7sus4*. Your licks will sound fresh, yet feel familiar.

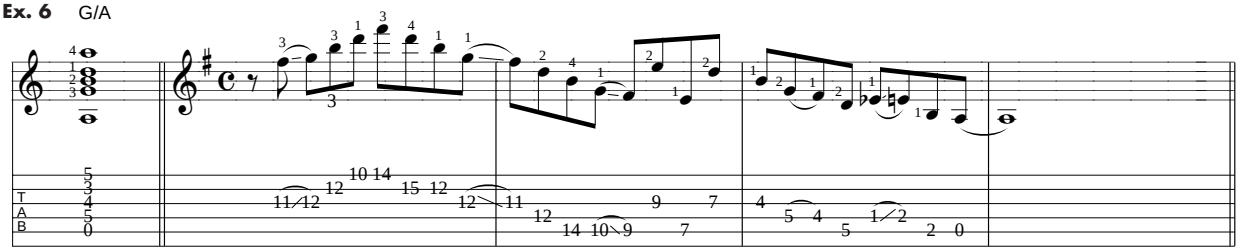
Ex. 4 A7sus4 (Em9/A)



Ex. 5 A7sus4 (Em9/A)



Ex. 6 G/A

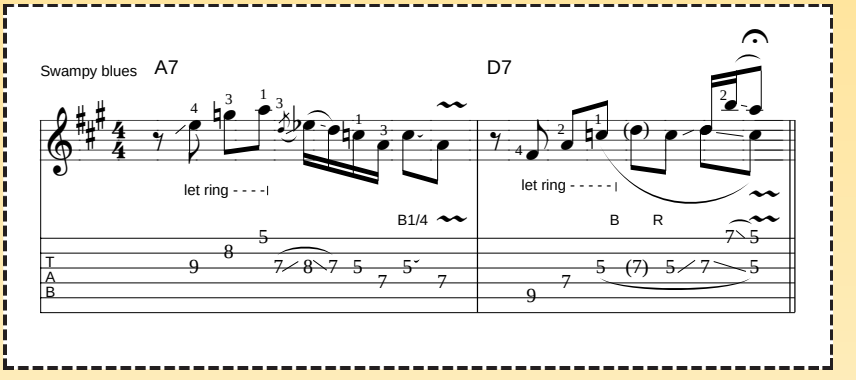


Garrison Fewell juggles touring and teaching at Berklee College of Music. Hear his introspective lines and round, dusky tone on *A Blue Deeper Than Blue*, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, and *Reflection of a Clear Moon* (all on Accurate, Box 390115, Cambridge, MA 02139).

Lick of the Month

RING OUT!

PORTLAND, OREGON'S DREW Bearse scored this month's lick. "What makes this lick so cool are the ringing arpeggios in beats one and two of each bar," he says. "Both arpeggios span five frets, so your fingers get some exercise. To hear the twangy chord that sets up each measure, be sure to sustain the three notes in each arpeggio as marked. Pull bar 2's bend toward your feet—yeah, that's it. Try some throbbing tremolo, a snappy bridge-pickup tone, and a pick-and-fingers grip."



Send us your candidate for Lick of the Month (preferably notated *and* on cassette), along with a brief explanation of why it's cool and how to play it. If we select your offering, you'll get a funky custom T-shirt that's available *only* to Lick of the Month club members. Mail your entry to Lick of the Month, *Guitar Player*, 411 Borel Ave. #100, San Mateo, CA 94402. Include your name, address, and phone number. Materials won't be returned, and please don't call the office to check the status of your submission. You'll get your shirt if your lick is chosen.

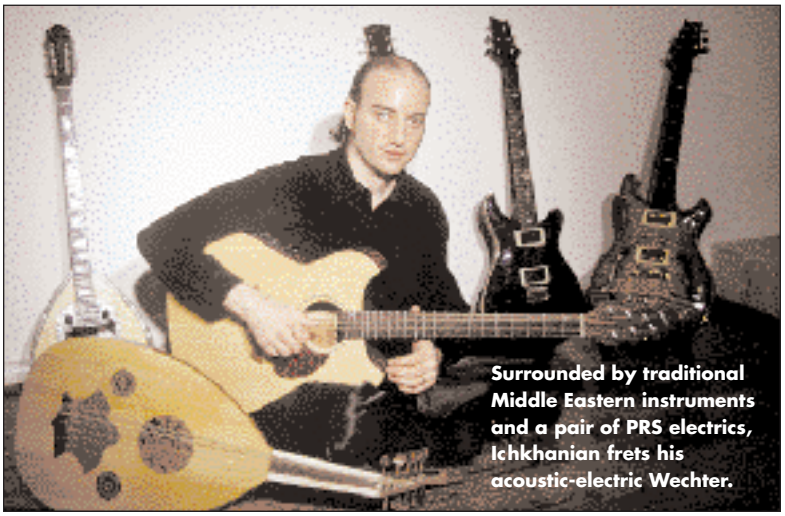
Hijaz for Guitar

BY LEVON ICHKHANIAN

MUSICIANS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN AT THE forefront of global integration. The combination of jazz and Middle Eastern music is an example of such integration, using improvisation (which plays a key role in both idioms) to unite the two.

In honor of this mix, let's explore one of the most common Middle Eastern scales—the *hijaz*—in relation to **Ex. 1**'s *E* Phrygian (1, ♭2, ♭3, 4, 5, ♭6, ♭7). Hijaz is the same mode with a raised 3 (*G*♯)—essentially a major Phrygian (**Ex. 2**).

Examples 3 and **4** are ascending and descending exercises that feature a slurring technique derived from such instruments as the oud (an ancestor of the lute). Practice these using downstrokes with a tonic *E* drone. The goal is to produce a smooth, even sound playing on only one string. Once you can do this at 120 bpm, move the exercises to other strings.



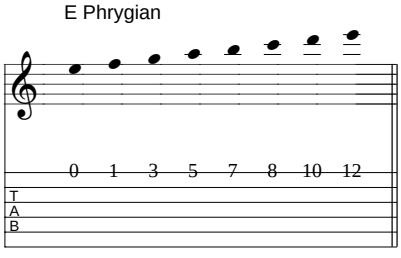
Surrounded by traditional Middle Eastern instruments and a pair of PRS electrics, Ichkhanian frets his acoustic-electric Wechter.

Examples 5 and **6** are melodic ideas using the hijaz scale. To add more color, experiment with adding the ♭3 (*G*♮) and ♮6 (*C*♯) as passing tones. Have a good trip.

A recipient of the Canadian All Star Jazz Award, guitarist/composer Levon Ichkhanian has studied with Pat Martino and Steve Khan. His latest releases are *Kick-in' Jazz* with Bernard Purdie and *After Hours*. The latter blends Armenian/Middle Eastern melodies with contemporary jazz and is available from www.ours.com/levon.

Ex. 1

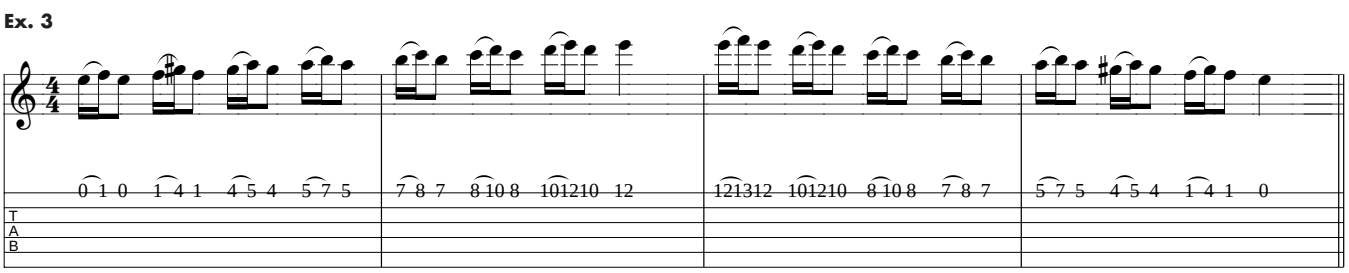
E Phrygian



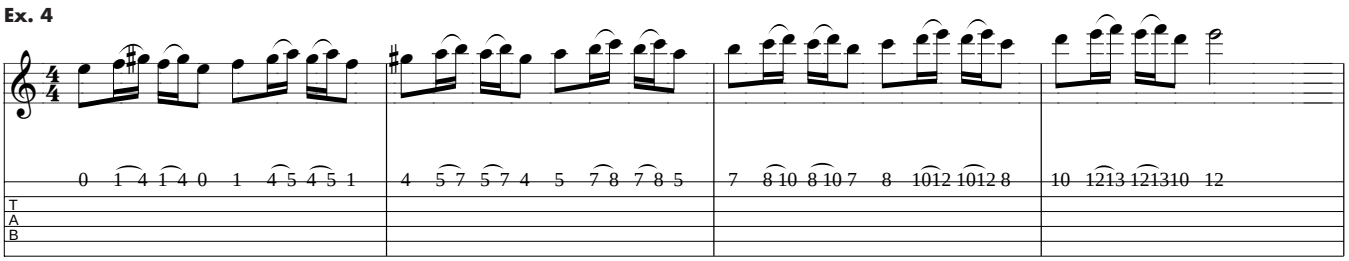
Ex. 2

E Hijaz

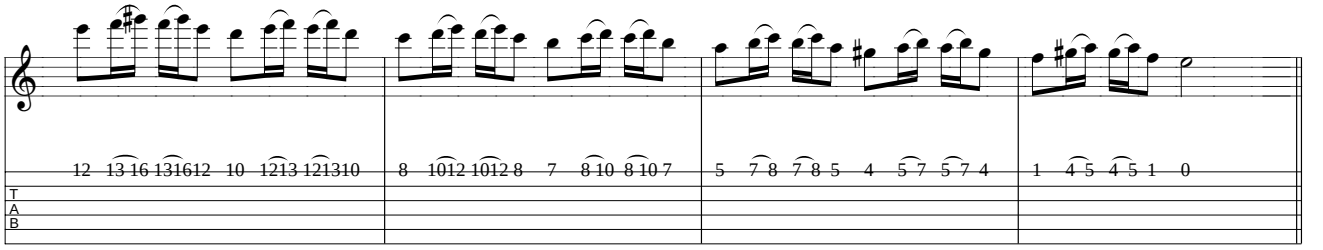
Ex. 3



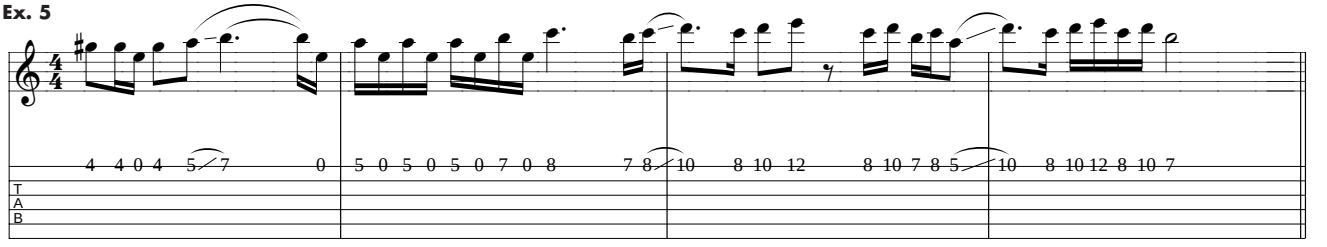
Ex. 4



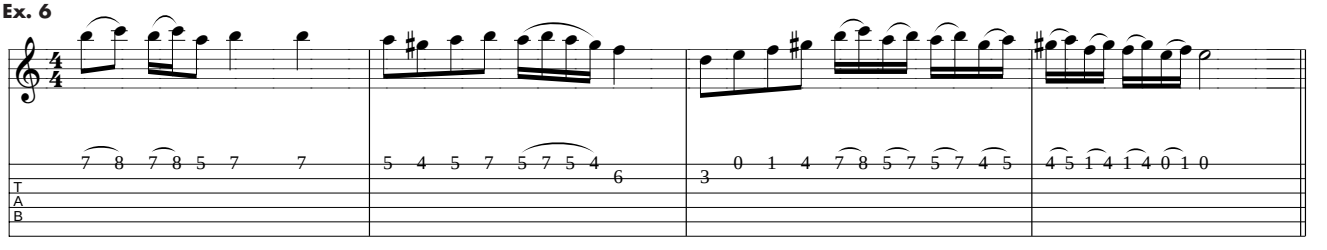
Ex. 4 (continued)



Ex. 5



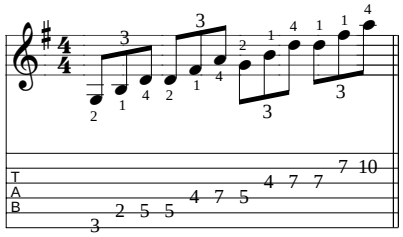
Ex. 6



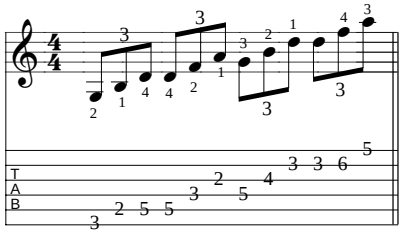
Summing Triads

BY ROBERT STANTON

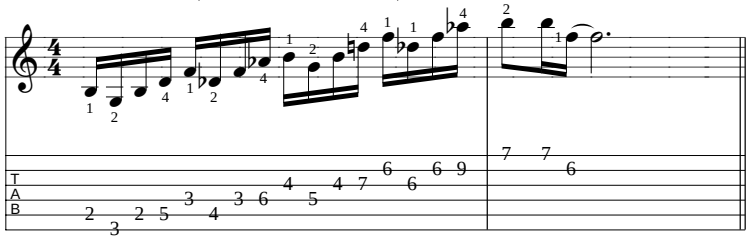
Ex. 1 G D G D



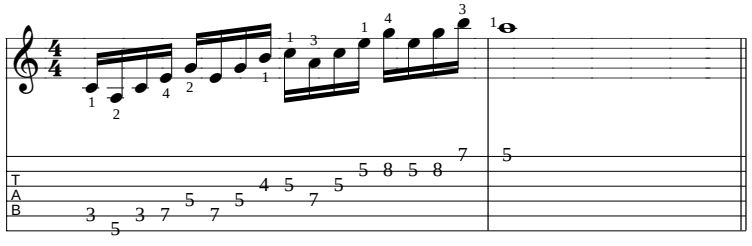
Ex. 2 G Dm G Dm



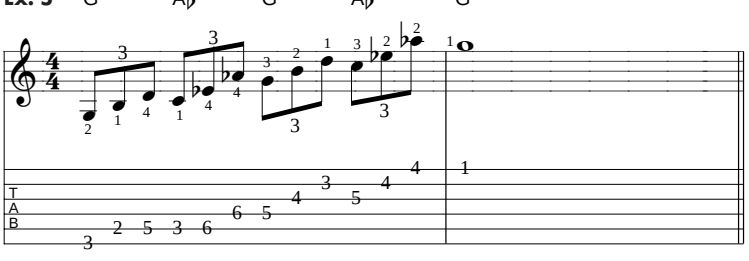
Ex. 3 G D♭ G D♭ G7



Ex. 4 Am Em Am Em Am



Ex. 5 G A♭ G A♭ G



DO YOU EVER GET bored constructing solos from scales? One way to generate non-scalar melodic material is to link related triad arpeggios in different combinations and sequences.

For instance, **Ex. 1** consists of alternating *G* and *D* arpeggios. Connected this way, these triads generate a *Gmaj9* sound. To re-create this formula in other keys, think I+V.

Similarly, **Ex. 2** shows how alternating *G* and *Dm* arpeggios sets up a *G9* vibe. This is a I+Vm formula.

The sequence in **Ex. 3** weaves *G* and *D♭* (I+♭V) triads into a *G7* altered-dominant line. **Ex. 4** creates an *Am9* by combining *Am* and *Em* (Im+Vm).

Finally, **Ex. 5** shows how to use inversions for smoother transitions. Here, we zip together *G* and *A♭* arpeggios (I+♭II) to create a tangy phrase.

Here are some other useful combinations:

- *G* and *Bm* (I+IIIm)
- *G* and *Em* (I+VIm)
- *G* and *C* (I+IV)
- *G* and *B♭* (I+ ♭III)
- *G* and *F* (I+♭VII)

Sequence these triad pairs in different positions, inversions, and keys until you begin to hear the magic. Soon you'll be able to incorporate summed triads into your solos.

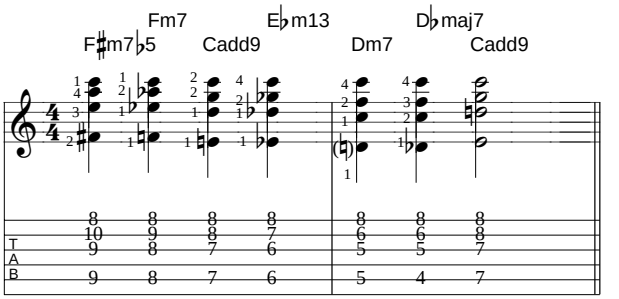
Robert Stanton teaches guitar, theory, and improvisation at Music Tech in Minneapolis.

IN SEPT. '84, THE LATE JOE Pass gave *GP* readers a private chord-melody lesson that included this finger- and ear-stretching progression. "It's commonly used for intros and endings," he explained. "The chords descend chromatically while keeping a common tone in the melody."

For a true *Virtuoso*-era sound, play this fingerstyle—thumb on the *A* string, and index, middle, and ring fingers on the *G*, *B*, and *E* strings. As you play through the chord sequence, imagine that each string is a separate instrument, and you're simultaneously playing four seven-note lines.

Transposition. "Learn everything you play in all keys," Joe advised. "If I don't confuse myself by thinking about what I'm doing, on a good night I can spontaneously play just about every tune I know in any key. There's no substitute for experience, so play, play, play."

Attitude. "I don't like all the bullshit that people try to attach to jazz," Joe said. "On one hand, some players try to pass their music off as having mystical qualities. On the other hand, you have polls that try to determine who's the fastest and the world's greatest. While you shouldn't belittle playing guitar, don't make so much out of it. I play because I like it. Improvisation isn't anything magical. It's usually just putting things together that you already know. When you do happen to play something you've never done before, those are the joyous times that make the journey worthwhile."



NOTES ON CALL

July '98 *Guitar Player* lessons:

1640 - **Chord Connections:** ROBERT BROWN
1641 - **Sus4 & More:** GARRISON FEWELL
1642 - **Chopin's Wormhole:** JOE GORE
1643 - **Hijaz for Guitar:** LEVON ICHKHANIAN
1644 - **Stretching Out:** JOE PASS
1645 - **Summing Triads:** ROBERT STANTON
1646 - **Lick of the Month:** RING OUT!
1647 & 1648 - **Pete Anderson lesson:** ANDY ELLIS

Joe Pass said, "Play, play, play!" So what are you going to do? Get inspired with *GP*'s Sessions sampler CD and its 11 cool lessons. Hey—it's a measly $5.00. You paid more for *ABBA's Greatest Hits*! Call 1-800-222-5544.

Net-heads: For the lowdown on *GP*'s music notation symbols—and to hear Sessions sound samples—visit **www.guitarplayer.com**.

ACCESSING NOTES ON CALL

To sample or record any lesson in this month's Sessions, call **1-900-370-0020** and enter the appropriate four-digit code. It costs 75¢ per minute. You'll need a touch-tone phone and parental permission if you're under 18. To better control your phone time, use these touch-tone commands: 7 = forward ten seconds; 8 = rewind ten seconds; 9 = pause ten seconds; # = skip to end; ∗ = repeat lesson.

This month's lessons are also available on CD for only $6.95 (plus $3.95 s/h). For credit card orders call 1-800-222-5544, or send check or money order to Notes On Call, July '98 Lessons, 146 2nd St. N., Ste. 201, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.